

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The Town of Greece has a quality of life that attracts new residents, businesses, and industry. It has excellent municipal, educational and medical services, as well as many attractive physical features. The value of its housing stock exceeds the average for the region. One of the town's goals is to preserve its heritage and natural resources.

Recently, an advisory committee for the update of the 1992 Community Master Plan adopted the following vision statement for the town:

The Town of Greece envisions itself as a physically, socially, and economically diverse community with an abundance of natural resources. It will continue to be a safe, well-maintained town that offers a variety of residential neighborhoods, as well as job opportunities, quality education, recreation, and shopping experiences. Greece's residents enjoy living, working, raising families, and retiring in the town, both now and in the future.

The 1992 Community Master Plan used a "build-out" scenario to estimate the magnitude of potential development and recommended several land use revisions. Since 1992, the town has undertaken many planning initiatives. These plans, representing major initiatives, include: the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans for the lakefront and the Erie Canal; and the Update of the West Ridge Corridor Study. Since the 1992 Community Master Plan, the community has identified several areas of concern. These are:

- Preservation of open spaces
- Preservation of neighborhood character
- Revitalization of commercial corridors
- Future industrial and office employment opportunities
- Prioritizing transportation and infrastructure needs
- Promotion of beautification and visual aesthetics
- Management of future growth

An ad hoc advisory committee was established to oversee the planning process for the updating of the 1992 plan. They held several public workshops including problem analysis, setting goals and objectives, to update the 1992 plan.

This 2001 Community Master Plan Update also developed a potential build-out scenario based on current zoning. The update tested the build-out scenario and made adjustments, addressing the market and the effects of fiscal impacts for future development. The adjusted model is called the "Balanced Community Scenario" and serves as a guide for future recommendations for land development.

The updated plan is organized into several Plan Elements. These elements are:

- Land Use
- Growth Management
- Recreation, Open Space, and Environmentally Sensitive Areas
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Historic Resources

Each Plan Element addresses:

- Issues and opportunities
- Goals and objectives
- Updated Plan and recommendations and actions to carry out the plan

The plan update incorporates several growth management tools, such as a future land use plan, planning districts, balanced community build-out model, and a fiscal impact model. These tools integrated the major planning initiatives to achieve its vision statement, provide for a stable tax base, and to ensure its quality of life.

I. Legislative Authority

The authority to conduct comprehensive planning and to adopt a comprehensive plan is granted to towns by the State Legislature. Adoption of a comprehensive plan by a town board requires that all town land use be in accordance with the plan. Furthermore, other governmental agencies must take the plan into consideration whenever their capital projects occur on land included in the town comprehensive plan. This provides a town with the appropriate guidance to review future projects and provides the essential background information and justification for amending or creating a zoning ordinance. The plan also provides developers/project sponsors with up-front guidance on where and how their projects can be developed, facilitating the site plan review process, and providing early detection of potential land use conflicts.

II. SEQR Compliance

In accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and the New York State Town Law (§ 272-a), adoption of the Town of Greece Community Master Plan Update by the Town Board is a Type I action subject to review under 6 NYCRR 617. Pursuant to Town Law § 272-a(8), this Plan also serves as a generic environmental impact statement.

The components of a generic environmental impact statement (GEIS), as outlined in 6 NYCRR 617.10, are included in this Plan as follows:

- Executive Summary – Introduction
- Project Description – Introduction, Development of a Comprehensive Vision, Update Plan Elements and Recommendations
- Environmental Setting – Inventory & Analysis
- Environmental Impact – Update Plan Elements and Recommendations (Potential Adverse & Beneficial Future Growth Impacts)
- Mitigation – Update Plan Elements and Plan Recommendations
- Unavoidable Adverse Impacts – Inventory and Analysis, Update Plan Elements and Plan Recommendations
- Alternatives – Alternatives
- Recommendations/Thresholds – Inventory and Analysis, Update Plan Elements and Plan Recommendations
- Growth-Inducing Aspects – Update Plan Elements and Recommendations

The evaluation of impacts and mitigation of a comprehensive plan is somewhat different than the typical environmental impact statement. This is because the plan and implementation recommendations of a comprehensive plan are typically beneficial or mitigative actions in response to the problems identified through the inventory and analysis and community outreach programs. This was very much the case for the Town of Greece. The primary issue facing Greece is the fact that the town is zoned for significant additional growth and development in a manner that would promote sprawl and would have a detrimental impact on the character of the community. Uncontrolled growth would significantly affect the character and uniqueness of residential neighborhoods, the character and success of commercial development and other business enterprises, the health of the natural environment, the ability to provide sufficient infrastructure, and the ability to pay for it all without creating a significant tax burden.

Fortunately, these potential adverse impacts can be avoided. Mitigation in the form of growth management and good planning, including the many programs and studies recommended in the Implementation Plan, will help the town to direct growth. This can be done in a beneficial manner that promotes the health, safety, and welfare of the community and retains the qualities that residents have identified as important. Growth will occur in the town that will result in unavoidable impacts to the environment. This can be evaluated better on a site-specific level. However, from a planning perspective, the recommendations presented herein and those resulting from further study are, in actuality, mitigation for impacts caused by the current regulatory tools used by the town to manage land use and growth. It should be noted that the fact that the town has zoning, subdivision regulations, a site plan review process, and dedicated staff and volunteers is a great base to work from and modify. Without these existing tools, the town would have many more problems and no longer would be considered a desirable place to live and work by residents and the business community.